



Fr. Mateja Matejic, Ph.D.

ORTHODOXY:

COURAGE
TO BE DIFFERENT



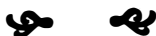
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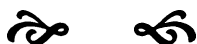
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ORTHODOXY:

COURAGE TO BE DIFFERENT - STRENGTH TO REMAIN THE SAME



The preservation of her identity as the authentic Christian Church has been the supreme task of the Eastern Orthodox Church from her inception until the present time. In accomplishing this task, she has had to endure and overcome merciless persecution at the hands of various non-Christians and, regretfully, some Christians.

In the United States of America the physical existence of the Eastern Orthodox Church is not endangered. However, she is threatened by a secular spirit, by sectarianism and cultist aggression. Some of her faithful, insufficiently familiar with the teaching of their own Orthodox Church and inundated with the religious propaganda of TV preachers and door-to-door sectarian 'evangelizers', are confused and *"tossed to and fro, and carried*

about with every wind of doctrine” [Ephesians 4:14] As Fr. Seraphim Rose pointed out,

The success of counterfeit spirituality even among Orthodox Christians today reveals how much they also have lost the savor of Christianity and pseudo-Christianity. For too long have Orthodox Christians taken for granted the precious treasure of their Faith and neglected to put into use the pure gold of its teaching. How many Orthodox Christians even know of the existence of the basic texts of Orthodox spiritual life, which teach precisely how to distinguish between genuine and counterfeit spirituality, texts which give the life and teaching of holy men and women who attained an abundant measure of God's grace in this life?¹

It appears that some of our Orthodox faithful in this country, oblivious to the teaching of their Orthodox Church and under the influence of their non-Orthodox environment, are in danger of losing their own Orthodox identity. While being nominally Orthodox, they appear to be infected by the germ of Protestantism. One may hear them talk about the need of the ‘modernization’ and ‘adaptation’ of the Orthodox Church in order to make her ‘more like other American churches...’, whatever that may mean!

It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that we help our faithful to remain steadfast in their religion, faithful to their Church, and immune to sectarian and cultist diseases. To all our faithful, but especially to our youth who might be tempted to look for spiritual food outside their Orthodox Church, we should repeat Prophet Jeremiah's admonition: *"Let not your prophets that are in the midst of you, and your diviners, deceive you For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the Lord."* [Jeremiah 29:8-9]

Knowledge about our own Orthodox faith and Church is the best protection from being confused and seduced by sects and cults. Yet, knowledge alone is not enough; we have to LIVE our Orthodoxy in order to LOVE it, and we have to LOVE it in order to LIVE it. Just to know about it, without practicing it, is only a sterile knowledge. As Metropolitan Philip of Moscow once stated: *"The Creed does not belong to you unless you have lived it."*

Some of our Orthodox brethren and sisters feel uncomfortable because we are a religious minority in this country and because we are different from other Christian denominations. Some of them wish we could 'change'. They have to reconcile themselves

to the fact that Orthodoxy means, among other things, the COURAGE TO BE DIFFERENT AND THE STRENGTH TO REMAIN THE SAME. True Christians have always been a minority in societies in which they found themselves. Being different does not mean being wrong or inferior. Christians were a minority in the Roman Empire. Apostles were different from their compatriots; the early Christian Martyrs and the Holy Fathers, were different from their social environment. Presently, too, it is inevitable for Orthodox Christians to be different because, as the late Fr. Alexander Schmemmann observed:

...the ultimate meaning of our present crisis is that the world in which the Orthodox Church must live today, be it in the East or in the West, is not her world, not even a 'neutral' one, but a world challenging her in her very essence and being, a world trying consciously or unconsciously to reduce her to values, philosophies of life and world views profoundly different from, if not totally opposed to, her vision and experience of God, man and life.²

In order to remain true to herself, true to her essence and her mission, the Orthodox Church must not change herself but, instead, strive to change the world. She has to resist the pressure which comes from inside and

outside, suggesting and often demanding her change - in fact, demanding her secularization and Protestantization. She must not change because as long as she adheres to her principles she remains and will remain what she has always been: the Church of total sanctification, the Church in which man finds his true self and the true way to God; the Church in which Christ-likeness rather than comfort is the most important concern and the meaning of existence. The strength, depth and beauty of Orthodoxy consists exactly in its preservation of authentic Christianity. According to Konrad Onash, a Protestant theologian, the author of Geist und Geschichte der Russischen Ostkirche (The Spirit and History of the Russian Eastern Church), Orthodoxy is the religion whose role and task is a "total sanctification of everything". Orthodoxy cannot, does not desire and must never modify Christ but Christians instead, because for the Orthodox faithful and the Orthodox Church CHRIST IS ONE, THE SAME, AND UNALTERABLE - and so is the ORTHODOX FAITH.

The Orthodox Church must also not change because she is the guardian of authentic Christianity. This is acknowledged even by some non-Orthodox religious writers who are familiar with Orthodoxy. Thus, for example, J. C. Dumont, a Roman Catholic

priest and the Director of the Center "Istina" (The Truth), writes in his "Introduction" to the book The Spirit of Eastern Orthodoxy, whose author is M. J. Le Guillou, another Roman Catholic priest:

But the West has lost at least something of its more humanly and religious ample character, and an expression of it (we are not speaking simply of language) closer to its original flavour, which has been better conserved in the East. We have only to think of the deep, authentic sense of the 'mysteric' character of the Christian religion still found in the East, of the atmosphere of sacramentality which envelops not only its worship but also the expression of faith, and even its exercise of authority, things of which our West may have kept an abstract notion but has almost wholly lost the reality.

This statement surprises only those - still, alas, very numerous among us - who have not gone to the trouble of looking into the source of our theological thought, of our liturgy and of our spirituality. Whenever one goes back to origins of the characteristics that mark the most flourishing eras of Latin Catholicism, one is led to the East. From the East came the decisive dogmatic formulations of the fundamental

Christian mysteries (the Trinity of the divine Persons in the unity of their nature; the duality of two perfect natures, divine and human in the one Person of the Word-made-flesh); from the East came many greater feasts of our liturgical cycle (in particular those which celebrate the all-holy Mother of God); from the East came monasticism. But not only that: reforms made necessary in the West by passing degeneracies in the Church's life have usually been carried radically by recourse to Eastern tradition.³

In The World's Great Religions, a publication of Life Magazine, it is stated: *"The Orthodox Church began in the Holy Land before there were any Christians in Rome. The New Testament was first written in Greek, and most early Church councils were Orthodox in character."*⁴ M. J. Le Guillou, author of The Spirit of Eastern Orthodoxy, expresses his admiration and appreciation for the Orthodox Church in the following words: *"Thanks to the rich culture in which she was soaked and the genius of the peoples which composed it, the Church in the East outstandingly embodied in her liturgical and spiritual life the very substance of the councils and theology of the first eight centuries"*.⁵ The same author also stated:

In accordance with the threefold mediation, prophetic, priestly and kingly, that characterizes the unity of her action, the Church in the East has never ceased to proclaim the Mystery, to keep it safe from all deviation and heresy, to celebrate it liturgically and to guide the faithful in their inward acceptance and understanding of it.⁶

R. M. French, another non-Orthodox writer, reminds his readers of the fact that the *“Orthodox Church presents a spectacle of the most venerable and often impressive continuity of life which is second to none in Christianity”*.⁷ Protestant authors Franz Dolger and Konrad Onash, as well as many others, also show the highest regard for the Orthodox Church, seeing in her the genuine Christian Church which has preserved authentic Christianity.

Considering the fact that even non-Orthodox individuals who are familiar with the Orthodox Church regard her as the authentic Christian Church, it is understandable that the Orthodox themselves, or at least a majority of them, firmly believe that their Orthodox Church is the authentic, original Christian Church. Thus, Paul, the Orthodox Archbishop of Finland categorically asserts that the: *“Orthodox Church does not need to give*

*proof of its historical authenticity; it is simply the direct continuation of the Church of the Apostolic Age.*⁸

The same firm belief in the Orthodox Church as the authentic Christian Church is expressed in a letter written by Orthodox Patriarchs in the year 1718, in which they stated: *"We preserve the doctrine of the Lord uncorrupted, and firmly adhere to the faith He delivered to us, and keep it free from blemish and diminution of great price, neither adding any thing, not taking any thing from it".*⁹

On the first Sunday of Easter Lent, when the Orthodox celebrate the Triumph of Orthodoxy and the victory over iconoclasm, the clergy and the people read aloud the Synodikon proudly announcing: ***"This is the Faith of the Apostles, this is the Faith of the Fathers, this is the Faith of the Orthodox, this is the Faith which has established the universe. This is our Orthodox Faith"*** and then all present, the clergy and the people, recite the Nicene Creed.

However, one may wonder how many of those who proudly recite the Creed and the Synodikon do indeed know enough about their Orthodox Church and faith. For the

benefit of those who are familiar with their Orthodoxy and of those who lack that familiarity, here we shall present a brief review of the most important historical facts and precepts of the teaching of the Holy Orthodox Church.

The term **Eastern** in the title of the Eastern Orthodox Church does not indicate her area of origin alone, but it also indicates her specific characteristics and qualities. On the other hand, the term **Eastern** must not be interpreted as an indication of Orthodoxy being restricted to a specific geographic area or representing a phenomenon related solely to the East. In fact, at present, the number of Orthodox believers is considerably larger in many other geographic areas than it is in the East. This means that the specific qualities of religiosity and spirituality, formerly characteristic of Eastern Christianity, have become a heritage of the West through the spreading of Orthodoxy.

The Eastern Orthodox Church, also known as the Greek Orthodox Church, which traditionally considers herself a direct continuation and canonical descendant of the ancient undivided Christian Church, began her historical existence on the first Pentecost [Acts 2:1-4]. Founded by the Lord Jesus Christ

[Matthew 16:18], this Church has preserved authentic Christianity, immaculate and intact, without alteration or omissions. She has upheld the dogmatic and liturgical authenticity of the original Church of Christ.

At the time of the persecution of Christians (33-318), the Church was glorified by a large number of martyrs and in the period of the struggle with heresies (325-787; 787-843), she defended Orthodoxy uncompromisingly. In addition, the intellectual and spiritual elite of the Christian Church, a large number of Church Fathers and Teachers, originated in the East.

Of the original Patriarchates - Jerusalem, Rome, Antioch, Alexandria and Constantinople - four were on Eastern territory and, following the division of the Church, these four Patriarchates remained together, while Rome, the Western Patriarchate, separated itself.

The division of the Church, a disastrous event in the history of Christianity, signaled the beginning of a never-ending struggle of the Eastern Orthodox Church to preserve her existence and identity. More frequently and longer than any other branch of Christianity, the Orthodox Church has been exposed to hostility and persecution at the hands of

various non-Christian and Christian adversaries. The territories populated by Orthodox believers often have been invaded and occupied by various enemies of Orthodoxy. In the past, the Arabs, the Turks, the Tartars, Teutonic Knights and Crusaders endangered the very existence of Orthodoxy and, in more recent history, Communists, Germans, their Ustashi allies and Moslems destroyed thousands of Orthodox churches and monasteries as well as murdered and/or imprisoned hundreds of thousands of Orthodox Christians. But they failed to eradicate Orthodoxy itself.

Formally, the division of the Church took place on July 16, 1054. However, some historians believe that it actually began around the 860's and was completed during the Crusaders' invasion and occupation of Constantinople in 1204-1261. A number of factors - dogmatic, canonical, cultural and historical - led to the division of the Church. Human elements and personal ambitions also played an important role in the tragic division of the Church.

In the course of centuries the gap between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church was widened. Atrocities committed by Roman Catholics against the Orthodox

Christians, however, are not just a matter of far and distant history. As recently as 1941-1945, 700,000 Serbian Orthodox Christians were slaughtered on the territory of the Nazi puppet-state, the so-called Independent State of Croatia. In that same period thousands of Serbian Orthodox Christians on that territory were forcibly converted to Roman Catholicism and Serbian Orthodox churches and monasteries were destroyed. While we know that the Vatican had clear evidence of these acts and atrocities, Pope Pius XII did not lift a finger to protect and/or save the innocent victims. Yet, Croatia is the fortress of Catholicism in the Balkans and the Pope certainly could have exerted some authority in ordering, or at least requesting, an end to forcible conversions and massacres.

Most recently, 1992-1994, the story of the massacre of Serbian Orthodox Christians on the territory of Croatia is being repeated. Thousands of Serbian Orthodox Christians have been massacred. Almost all Serbian Orthodox churches and monasteries in Croatia have been totally destroyed. Pope John Paul, who is so concerned about the "human rights" of other peoples, has not lifted either his voice or his finger to protect Serbian victims. On the contrary, together with the "hawks" in the USA, France and

Germany, he favors “punishing the aggressor” - by which he means the Serbs. During 1941-1945, when GENOCIDE against the Serbs was certainly committed by criminals and murderers loyal to the Pope, the word “genocide” was not even mentioned. Now, this is the favorite word in the vocabulary not only of all the enemies of the Serbs, but of Orthodoxy as well.



The primary differences between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church concern:

- a) Filioque;
- b) Primacy of the Pope;
- c) Infallibility of the Pope;
- d) Unleavened bread used for Holy Communion;
- e) Exact moment of transubstantiation;
- f) Administering Holy Communion in one aspect (bread) only;
- g) Purgatory;
- h) Immaculate conception of the Mother of God;
- i) Celibacy of the clergy;
- j) Chrismation practiced as confirmation and administered separately from baptism;
- k) Chrismation (confirmation) administered by bishops only;
- l) Change of calendar;
- m) Celebration of Easter contrary to the rules established by the Councils;
- n) Baptism by sprinkling, rather than by immersion.

Some of these differences will be discussed further below. Here, we shall make some remarks concerning Roman Catholic teachings about purgatory, the immaculate conception of the Theotokos, the change of the calendar, papal primacy and papal infallibility.

According to Roman Catholic theology, purgatory is a 'special place' where sinful souls are kept until the Last Judgment. This is related to the teaching concerning indulgences and the 'superabundance of virtues of saints from which borrowing is made to distribute to those souls who are in need'. Neither the Orthodox Church nor the Protestants accept this innovation of the Roman Catholic Church.

The calendar change was done at the order of Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. The change caused a great confusion in both the ECCLESIASTICAL CALENDAR and liturgical cycle. Presently, the "new", or Gregorian calendar, is thirteen days ahead of the Orthodox (Julian) calendar. Moreover, both the Roman Catholic and the Protestant churches violate the rules of the General Councils concerning celebration of Christ's Resurrection whereby their celebration coincides with, or even precedes, Jewish Passover. Regretfully, some Orthodox churches have adopted

the Gregorian calendar (all but one, though, retaining the Orthodox Paschalia), thereby causing liturgical disunity among the Orthodox.

Roman Catholic theology teaches that the Mother of God was conceived immaculately, the way our Lord Jesus Christ was conceived. This dogma was proclaimed by the Roman Catholic Church - in 1854! For EIGHTEEN CENTURIES 'infallible' Popes neither believed nor taught so! According to the Orthodox Church, this dogma represents elevating the Mother of God above the place given to her by God. Moreover, by this dogma the Roman Catholic Church attributes to the Mother of God something that is the UNIQUE PROPERTY OF THE SON OF GOD.

Papal primacy - the belief that the Pope is head of the entire Church - is claimed by the Roman Catholic Church on the basis of the text in the Gospel according to St. Matthew:

And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter; and upon THIS ROCK I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. [Matthew 16:18-19]

Usually, this Scriptural passage is quoted by the Roman Catholics out of context. For a better understanding and interpretation of the above passage, one should read the entire relevant text in Matthew and begin a few verses earlier.

When Jesus came to the coasts of Ceaserea Phillipi, He asked His disciples, saying: "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" And they said: "Some say that Thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." He saith unto them: "But whom say ye that I am?" And Simon Peter answered and said, "THOU ART THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD". And Jesus answered and said unto him: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed IT unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee: 'Thou art Peter; and upon THIS rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. [Matthew 16:13-19]

Orthodox theology insists that the belief that Christ is the Son of the Living God, and not Peter, a human being, is the rock upon which the Christian Church is built. Every time we Orthodox Christians approach the chalice to receive Holy Communion, we proclaim and confess: "I BELIEVE, O LORD, AND CONFESS THAT THOU ART TRULY CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD..." This - this belief - in fact, is the IT which was not revealed to Peter by flesh and blood.

The Christian Church could exist without the belief in papal primacy, but there could be no Christian Church without the belief that Christ is the Son of the Living God.

Apostle Peter was not the only apostle who received 'the keys of the Kingdom of God'. In the Gospel according to St. Matthew [18:18], our Lord Jesus Christ addressed ALL His apostle's, saying: "*Verily I say unto you: whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.*" And in the Gospel according to St. John [20:22-23], we read: "*Then said Jesus to THEM again: 'Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent me, even so I send you'. And when He had said this, he breathed on THEM, and saith unto THEM: 'Receive ye the Holy ghost. Whose*

soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained'."

We, the Orthodox Christians, believe that neither apostle Peter, nor the Pope, nor any human being can be the Head and/or Foundation of the Church, because, as will be shown in the ensuing quotes from the Bible, the only Head and Foundation of the Church is CHRIST HIMSELF.

Here are Scriptural texts supporting the above Orthodox belief:

And He is the Head of the body, THE CHURCH, who is the Beginning, the First-born from the dead, that in all things He may enjoy PREEMINENCE. [Colossians 1:18]

(God the Father) ... raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only IN THIS WORLD, but also in that which is to come. And hath put all things under His feet, AND GAVE HIM TO BE THE HEAD OVER ALL THINGS TO THE CHURCH, WHICH IS HIS BODY, THE FULLNESS OF HIM THAT FILLETH ALL IN ALL. [Ephesians 1:20-23]

The CHURCH being CHRIST'S BODY, how could **that body have someone else as its head? Let us refer to two more quotes from the Bible which support the Orthodox belief that Christ IS the Head of the Church:**

Now, therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundations of APOSTLES and PROPHETS, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNER STONE; in Whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto the holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. [Ephesians 2:19-22]

For other foundation CAN NO MAN LAY ~~than~~ that is laid, WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST. [I Corinthians 3:11]

The dogma about Papal Infallibility was proclaimed in 1870. It has no support either in the Holy Scriptures or in Sacred Tradition. Moreover, it is a known fact that several Popes ERRED in matters of faith and have been considered HERETICS even by the Roman Catholic Church. Common reason tells us that human beings are not and cannot be infallible. Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans: "As it is written: *THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NO, NOT ONE.*" [Romans 3:10] In the Ortho-

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dox Church, the prayer for the deceased contains these words addressed to God: *"For Thou alone art without sin, and Thy righteousness is to all eternity, and Thy word is truth."*



In view of the fact that Protestantism has a large number of different groups, each having its own set of beliefs and no UNITY OF FAITH, it is rather difficult to compare Orthodoxy to Protestantism.

From the beginning of the sixteenth century, when it came to existence, until the present day, Protestantism has represented a religious, social and cultural factor which has had a significant impact on the history of the world. The history of Christianity is incomplete without consideration being given to Protestantism. Its influence on the culture of the United States is quite obvious. In our daily life we Orthodox in this country have frequent contacts with Protestants. We could not have failed to notice that there are some sincere and devoted Christians among them. We most likely have noticed their missionary zeal, philanthropic endeavors, quests for knowledge, love of freedom, ability to organize and quite liberal religious tolerance. However, while being impressed by the qualities displayed by individual Protestants, we

owe to ourselves to consider also the dogmatic position of Protestantism as such in order to be able to say a meaningful YES or NO to Protestantism from the point of view of authentic Christianity.

The first question we must ask is: WHAT IS PROTESTANTISM? Henry van Dusen, a Protestant himself, defines Protestantism as:

...the branch of Christianity which sprang up in the sixteenth century in the attempt to recover original, authentic Christian faith and life by purging the Church of the West in that day of its worst perversions, abuses and excesses.¹⁰

On the basis of this definition, yet without asserting or questioning its correctness, we may rightly conclude that PROTESTANTISM IS NOT THE ORIGINAL FORM OF CHRISTIANITY: IT DID NOT EXIST UNTIL THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY. It emerged as an OPPOSITION TO ABUSES practiced in the Western, i.e., Roman Catholic Church.

The latter conclusion enables us to further realize that Protestantism is a progeny of Roman Catholicism, rather than of Christianity, as such. The intent of Protestant Reformation to restore "original, authentic

faith and life" was rather noble, yet the failure of Protestantism to realize that goal has to be admitted. We regret to say, but, historically and dogmatically, Protestantism is NOT the road to authentic Christianity - but A ROAD LEADING AWAY FROM IT.

One must also point out that Dusen's definition of Protestantism refers to it in terms of a monolithic, homogeneous religious entity, which in fact IT IS NOT. Protestantism comprises a multitude of different and, in some cases, mutually exclusive religious views, ideas, precepts, practices and groups.

Some of the Protestant denominations emerged at the beginning of the sixteenth century, others came into existence much later. Some are of quite recent origin. The process of dissolution of the formerly integral, smaller or larger, Protestant groups is an ongoing process and new sects continue to emerge at an almost alarming rate.

From its inception, Protestantism has been a pluralistic and heterogeneous institution. Various branches of Protestantism, if we may use this terminology, were established at different times and by different religious leaders. Thus, for example, almost simultaneously

- yet independently from Martin Luther, the founder of Lutheranism and Protestantism - other former Roman Catholics, (e.g., Zwingli, Calvin and Knox), rebelled against the Roman Catholic Church and established their types of Protestantism.

The disunity and heterogeneity of contemporary Protestantism, now consisting of several hundred sects and factions, is so evident that it does not need to be illustrated with specific examples. However, despite that disunity and heterogeneity, there are some views, practices and tendencies common to at least a majority of Protestants, if not to all. For this reason, some comparison between Orthodoxy and certain Protestant beliefs, more or less common to a majority of Protestants, may be made.

Originally, Protestantism was conceived not only to be AGAINST something, to PROTEST, but also to STAND FOR something (*pro* = for; *testare* = to witness, to profess, to proclaim). In its positive and affirmative aspect, Protestantism was meant to be a courageous demand for the indispensable moral regeneration and spiritual rejuvenation of the Roman Catholic Church. At the same time, it was conceived as a much needed and fully justified protest against the spiritual

decline and moral degeneration of the Roman Catholic Church. Had Protestantism accomplished its initial intent and purpose, had it been PRO (for) an integral reform and AGAINST the widespread corruption within the Roman Catholic Church, it would have been a religious movement most beneficial for all of Christianity. Regretfully, in actuality, almost from its very beginning, Protestantism ceased to be a reformation of the Roman Catholic Church and became A DENIAL OF THE CHURCH, as such.

Here is a brief historical background to Protestantism. Luther's Reformation, which took place in the sixteenth century, has been considered the official and actual beginning of Protestantism. Yet, the roots of the Reformation and of Protestantism must be sought and found in the Middle Ages. The Papal struggle for supremacy, the Pope's lust for power, secular as well as ecclesiastical, provided conditions and opened the road to Protestantism. Already in 1230, Frederick II, who was fighting against Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241), wrote in his Manifesto that this 'power-hungry' Pope was "the great Dragon and Antichrist of the last days".¹¹ In 1301, Philip the Fair of France (1285-1314), another ruler who was involved in fighting the Pope, publicly burned the Bull of Pope Boniface VIII

(1294-1303). In 1303, the same ruler captured Pope Boniface and kept him in custody as a "heretic, blasphemer and simoniac."¹² Similarly, in 1323, Ludwig of Bavaria declared Pope John XXII (1316-1334) a "formal heretic."¹³

The degeneration of spirituality and morality among the clergy and people of the Roman Catholic Church must be considered as the primary cause of Luther's Reformation. However, prior to Luther's attack on Papal authority, Michael of Cesena and William Okham, members of the Franciscan order, questioned the claim of the Popes that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself had instituted the Papacy. Marsillious of Padua, Peter d'Ailly and John Gerson also preceded Luther with dogmatic attacks on the Papacy.

There were other opponents of the Papacy as well. The Popes, however, through their appalling behavior, were themselves the worst enemies of that institution. The authority of that office was greatly undermined by the disgraceful and scandalous period known in history as the "Babylonian Captivity of the Popes", or, as "The Great Schism of the West", which lasted from 1378 to 1417. This infamous period began at the time Pope Urban VI (1378-1389) was elected in Rome and his rival, Pope Clement VII

(1378-1394), was elected at the same time in Avignon. Both Popes hastened to excommunicate each other. Each Pope also excommunicated each other's adherents and supporters. This meant that virtually EVERY ROMAN CATHOLIC OF THAT PERIOD - BOTH CLERGY AND LAY PEOPLE - WAS EXCOMMUNICATED from the Roman Catholic Church.

The situation was further complicated when the Council of Pisa deposed both Popes and declared them to be "NOTORIOUS SCHISMATICS AND HERETICS".¹⁴ In 1409 the Council then elected Alexander V as the 'legitimate' Pope. Thus, at one and the same time there were actually THREE Popes, each of whom claimed to be the successor of Saint Peter and the plenipotentiary of Jesus Christ. This disgraceful situation was finally resolved in 1417 when the Council of Constance elected Martin V, replacing THREE RIVAL POPES WITH YET ANOTHER.

The infamous period of the "Babylonian Captivity of the Popes" was followed by a period of moral collapse of the Papacy. It began during the reign of Pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484) and lasted through the reign of Pope Leo X. Even Roman Catholic authors consider this historical period as the lowest level of the Papacy. The nepotism of Sixtus IV

was no less offensive and repulsive to sincere Roman Catholic Christians than was the scandalous life of Innocent VIII (1484-1492), the famous author of the 1484 Bull Against Witches. The people's hatred for Alexander VI (1492-1503), a murderer and a debaucher, was reinforced by the immoral deeds of his children, son Cesare and daughter Lucrecia Borgia. Lucrecia's abysmal perversion and Cesare's diabolical obsession with power and lust for blood were as repulsive to faithful believers as were the deeds of their corrupted father. Savanarola, the living reproach of Papacy, was burnt at the stake at the order of Pope Alexander VI. Then came the reign of Pope Julius II (1503-1513), a passionate warrior and capable soldier, but incompetent as a spiritual leader. At the end of this list of morally inept Popes stands the name of Pope Leo X (1513-1521), a pleasure-loving hedonist. The worldliness of this Pope, as well as of the Popes of this period in general, is reflected in their practice to surround themselves, even during solemn religious processions, with statues of naked pagan gods and goddesses.

The positive and constructive efforts of the pious and sincere believers were overshadowed by the unchristian manners and immoral acts of the impious clergy and people.

The higher clergy, primarily the bishops, consisted of noblemen who became priests for pecuniary rather than spiritual motives. They turned service to God and the spiritual guidance of the people into a lucrative business. The lower clergy, on the other hand, was in a precarious economic situation. Their theological training and personal morals, too, were often no better than their economic situation. According to Karl Adam, a Roman Catholic:

Documentary evidence indicates that there was amongst them much brutality, drunkenness, gambling, avarice, simony and superstition. To secure a living for themselves they exacted almost insupportable fees for the slightest exercise of their priesthood, even from the poor and destitute. The charge for the administration of the Last Sacrament was so high that Extreme Unction was called 'the sacrament of the rich.' Concubinage was so general that at the Councils of Constance and Basil the Emperor Sigismund proposed the abolition of the law of celibacy.¹⁵

The corruption amongst the clergy was of such proportion that Innocent IV in 1245 and Gregory X in 1274 declared that "*All evil is from the clergy*" (*Omne malum a clero*).¹⁶

Pope Adrian III was of the same opinion and contended that *"Vice has grown so much a matter of course that those who are stained with it are no longer aware of the stink of sin."*¹⁷

In addition to the moral collapse of the Papacy and clergy, which was a factor that detrimentally affected the general attitude toward the Church, the Roman Catholic Church also conducted economic oppression and exploitation of her members. Numerous taxes of various types were imposed upon Catholic principalities and states as well as individuals as a source of income for the Popes. Karl Adam notes that *"The spirit of Mammon had won such an ascendancy in the Curia that Pope Clement VII [1523-1534, MM], for example, at the very height of the Reformation storm, was trying to make money from the sale of Cardinals' hats."*¹⁸ Finally, the sale of indulgences was a popular and effective money-raising project of the Popes, a practice which eventually aroused Martin Luther's indignation and led to the Reformation and Protestantism.

Already during the reign of Pope Boniface IX (1389-1404), indulgences were sold to the living for their benefit. However, from the middle of the XV century, the Popes introduced the sale of indulgences for the benefit

of the dead. This practically meant that a living Roman Catholic person was able to purchase indulgences for his or her deceased relatives. Abuses related to the sale of indulgences were appalling. Peraudi, a legate of Pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484) and a seller of indulgences, declared that:

...Indulgences could be made CERTAINLY effective for any soul in Purgatory, even if the person gaining it was in a state of mortal sin so long as the indulgence work (i.e. the money payment) was performed.¹⁹

In 1517, Pope Leo X (1513-1521) intensified the sale of indulgences in order to collect the funds needed to complete the building of St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome, which was originally started by Pope Julius II (1503-1513). In Germany, J. Tetzel was in charge of this commercial enterprise. It was conducted in such an undignified manner that it offended and scandalized many devoted Roman Catholics. Martin Luther, who at that time was a Roman Catholic monk, revolted openly against this sacrilegious practice. On October 31, 1517, he nailed on the door of the court chapel in Wittenberg his 95 theses, i.e. questions, which he proposed to debate with Tetzel in order to prove abuses and offenses

committed within the Roman Catholic Church. At that time it was dangerous to challenge Papal authority and Martin Luther showed considerable courage in criticizing the commercial spirit and sacrilegious practices instituted and promoted by the Popes and clergy. However, Luther felt relatively secure, because Ulrich von Hutten, the ruler of Wittenberg, had promised to protect him.

In 1518, an inquiry into the case of Luther was initiated. It was conducted by Thomas de Vio of Gaieta, better known as Cajetan. No definite resolution was determined; neither party won a decisive victory.

In 1520, Luther showed some willingness to abandon his militant opposition, but the period of calm did not last very long. Provoked by both his friends and enemies, Luther resumed his aggressiveness. His final break with the Roman Catholic Church took place in December of 1520, when he publicly burned the Bull of the Pope and the Codex of the Roman Catholic Church. All attempts to reconcile him with the Popes and to bring peace between the warring Protestants and the Roman Catholics failed. The efforts of the Councils of Worms in 1521, in Spyer in 1529, and in Augsburg in 1538 were futile, and only in 1555 was a semblance of peaceful coexistence achieved between the

Protestants and the Roman Catholics. The peace was secured by the Treaty of Augsburg, but the war continued and, in fact, still may be said to continue.

The essence of Protestant doctrine, particularly of Lutheran doctrine, is comprised in two main principles: the so-called **Material Principle** and the **Formal Principle**. The "material principle" is the very heart of Protestantism and lies in the foundation of the entire structure of Protestant doctrine. According to that principle, salvation, which is an exclusive act of God, can be achieved BY FAITH ALONE. The "formal principle", on the other hand, confirms the Bible (actually only a portion of it!) as the sole and exclusive authority and source of Christianity. Both these principles will be discussed later in this text.



From the point of view of the Holy Orthodox Church, Protestantism holds many erroneous and heretical teachings in the areas of Christology, pneumatology, eschatology, and ecclesiology. The following erroneous beliefs, held by one or another Protestant group, represent the major points on which Protestantism differs from the Eastern Orthodox, i.e. the Authentic Christian Church:

- 1) Unitarianism, i. e. rejection of the Holy Trinity;
- 2) Negation of the divinity of Christ (modern Arianism);
- 3) Rejection of immaculate conception of Jesus Christ;
- 4) Filioque and other erroneous teachings concerning the Holy Spirit;
- 5) The erroneous teaching concerning the essence of human nature prior to original sin and after it. Insistence on the incorrigible corruptness of human nature, which allegedly was changed in substance by original sin;
- 6) Erroneous and heretical eschatological teachings:
 - a) the grace of God is the sole factor in human salvation;
 - c) human (good) deeds are irrelevant for the salvation of the soul;
 - d) predestination;
 - e) sins can be forgiven by God alone, yet can never be cleansed from human nature;
 - f) disbelief in immortality and the Last Judgment;
- 7) Unorthodox teachings concerning the Church:
 - a) ecclesiastical monophysitism, i.e. rejection of the human nature of the Church;
 - b) rejection of hierarchy;
 - c) denial of the infallibility of the Church;
 - d) acceptance of only TWO sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion, but in fact rejecting their sacramental aspect and accepting only the symbolic aspect.
 - e) rejection of the external deeds of piety (fasting, asceticism, etc.)
- 8) Rejection of the veneration of the Mother of God and the cult of saints;
- 9) Rejection of Sacred Tradition, the teachings of the Holy Fathers, the decisions of the Seven General Councils as the source of teaching and discipline;

- 10) Ministers (and bishops) allowed to marry even after ordination, and allowed to divorce and remarry;
- 11) Ordination of females;
- 12) No apostolic succession;
- 13) Manner of the ordination of the clergy;
- 14) No baptism of infants (some, not all Protestant denominations);
- 15) Rejection of the veneration of sacred objects: icons, relics of saints and the Holy Cross;
- 16) Rejection of prayers for the deceased;
- 17) Interpretation of the Holy Scriptures entrusted to individuals;
- 18) Change of calendar and celebration of Easter contrary to the rules set by the General Councils.
- 19) Arbitrary acceptance and/or rejection of the canonical parts of the Holy Scripture.

This is not a complete list of doctrinal principles characteristic of various Protestant denominations; yet, evidently, the number of major points on which they differ from the authentic Christian **ORTHODOX** teachings are numerous. It becomes clear that Protestantism does not nor ever did possess the four basic qualities of the **TRUE CHURCH**, that is, **IT NEVER WAS NOR IS - ONE, HOLY, UNIVERSAL AND APOSTOLIC CHURCH - IN ITS ORIGIN AS WELL AS IN ITS ESSENCE.**

Pluralism, secularism, undisciplined individualism, exaggerated liberalism seem to be the most serious maladies of contemporary Protestantism. These tendencies within

Protestantism, particularly those within its radical wings, are beginning to alarm even some Protestants. Thus, for instance, the Lutheran bishop, Staehling of Oldenburg, in his book What are Catholic Tendencies? attacked: *"...that modern perversion of Lutheran belief which considers the 'banalities of unbridled liberalism' born of the Enlightenment as the true essence of Protestantism."*²⁰ Karl Adam defines that attitude as one which

...thinks that the difference between Protestant and Catholic is simply that the Protestant 'feels that he is responsible to his own conscience,' so that for him there is 'no binding dogma and no compulsory creed.' Yet, dogma, cult and the Church's constitution belong to the 'true heritage of the Reformation'.²¹

The tendency to identify views and capacities of individual persons as superior to the collective teaching of the CHURCH is curbed in the Orthodox as well as in the Roman Catholic Church, whereas in Protestantism it seems to be encouraged. Of course, even Protestantism, i.e. a preponderant majority if not all the Protestant denominations, has some basic rules and requirements which are binding for all members. Nonetheless, Protestantism, in placing so much emphasis on the individual rather than on the collective,

orients individuals toward isolation and anarchy. For this reason, some Protestant individuals consider themselves to be ABOVE the Church, instead of being IN the Church. For some of them, the highest doctrinal authority is their own opinion, their "personal conscience" and their individual "religious awareness." In opposition to these and similar tendencies within Protestantism, Staehling, the aforementioned Lutheran bishop of Oldenburg, made the following statement:

If a man believes that he can sacrifice the fullness of the Christian revelation to some vague formless religious belief in Providence, he may hold himself to be a good Protestant, but in the true Reformation sense of the word, he is simply not Christian.²²

Lutheran bishop Staehling is saying NO to one specific, radical type of Protestantism. Regretfully, yet dutifully and firmly, Christianity represented by the Authentic, Holy Orthodox Church, has to say NO to all and any form and aspect of Protestantism. This NO is to the erroneous and heretical doctrine or doctrines of Protestantism, but not to the Protestants, the human beings, our fellow men. Our NO to Protestantism is not motivated by either spite or hatred, but by our desire to preserve the authenticity of Christianity and

the sanctity of the CHURCH. We do not oppose Protestantism on the grounds that it desired the reform of the Roman Catholic Church, but on the grounds that it has become a FOE OF THE CHURCH herself. Finally, we have to say NO to Protestantism because THE CHURCH and PROTESTANTISM ARE INCOMPATIBLE. By saying NO to Protestantism, we at the same time say YES to the CHURCH, because

The teaching authority of the Church can do no more than draw on the riches of Christ. The Church has only to testify to the Lord's truth, not to create it. She is not herself the light but is to give testimony to the Light. The Church's teaching activity is thus not creative. She generates no new truths of herself. She only takes the old truths, objectively given in Christ's revelation (explicitly or at least in a germ), and brings them into subjective consciousness of the faithful.²³

This is exactly why we are saying NO to Protestantism which seems to be ever increasingly concerned with creating rather than with revealing the truth. We cannot accept Protestantism because it seems to be going away from, rather than coming toward, Christ, Christianity and the Church.



Now that we have briefly discussed Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, we may turn our attention to the teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church.

The estimated number of practicing Orthodox Christians in the world today is 150,000,000; however, the number of the baptized Orthodox faithful is much larger. One should remember that in Communist countries Orthodox believers were not free to practice their religion. The preponderant majority of Orthodox Christians today live in Russia, Ukraine, Greece and the Balkans, yet their number is steadily increasing in Europe, America, Australia, New Zealand, and many other countries.

The very name of the Orthodox Church is a claim of authenticity, as the term ORTHODOX derives from two Greek words meaning 'right believing', 'right teaching', 'right worshiping'. Thus, the Orthodox Church signifies, by her very title, that she is the right-believing and right-teaching Church.

The very same Church is variably known as the Eastern Orthodox and the Greek Orthodox. In addition, any of these titles is

usually preceded by an adjective denoting the national background of a particular Orthodox church, i.e., Russian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Syrian, Albanian, etc.

The sources of Orthodox teaching are the Holy Bible and Sacred Tradition.

It is sometimes thought that Orthodox attach less importance than Western Christians to the Bible. Yet in fact Holy Scripture is read constantly in Orthodox services; during the course of Matins and Vespers the entire Psalter is recited each week, and in Lent twice a week. The reading of the Gospel forms the climax of Matins on Sundays and feasts; at the liturgy a special Epistle and Gospel are assigned for each day of the year, so that the whole New Testament (except the Revelation of St. John) is read at the Eucharist. The liturgy contains 98 quotations from the Old Testament and 114 from the New.²⁴

It was the Church which, on the basis of Sacred Tradition, determined which books were to be included in the Holy Scripture and in what order. *"The Church has given us the Bible through tradition, and the Reformers themselves received the Bible from the Church and by the Church, that is to say, by tradition."*²⁵

As important as Sacred Tradition was in determining the content of the Bible, it is equally important for proper interpretation of the Bible. The Bible without the Church and Sacred Tradition is insufficient as a source of Christian teaching. Even Schelermacher, a father of the Lutheran church, admitted: *"Reverence for the Holy Scripture cannot be the foundation of faith in Christ. This faith must rather be the presupposition, that the Scriptures may be guaranteed the reverence due to them.."*²⁶

One wonders how many 'Bible-oriented' Christians, whether Orthodox or non-Orthodox, are aware that

The Church of the New Testament, during the first flourishing days of its existence, lived entirely without sacred books, without even the Gospels; these were produced only in the course of the first century, and were made part of the canon, together with the Epistles, much later, finally taking definite form at the beginning of the fourth century.²⁷

Without denying or belittling the authority of the Bible, one must, nevertheless, mention the authority of the Church and Sacred Tradition in this matter because

...the Church came into being first, and only afterwards, little by little, did the books of the New Testament, the Gospels and Epistles appear. Moreover, when we take into account how few "books", or manuscripts, there were in those days, and the fact that besides the genuine writings there were gospels and texts written under the names of the Apostles, it is easy to understand how important the living Tradition of the Church was in safeguarding the true Christian faith. The prime importance of the Tradition is plainly shown by the fact that it was not until the fifth century that the Church established conclusively which books in circulation should be regarded as genuinely inspired by God's revelation. Thus the Church itself determined the composition of the Bible.²⁸

The sources of Sacred Tradition are the following:

1. The books of the Holy Scripture;
2. Decrees and definitions which were formulated by the seven General Councils (325 in Nicaea; 381 in Constantinople; 431 in Ephesus; 451 in Chalcedon; 553 in Constantinople; 680 in Constantinople; and 787 in Nicaea). Definitions, decrees and formulation of the Council of Trullo, held in 691, are also a part of Sacred Tradition;

3. Universal Creeds: a) Nicene; b) Apostolic, and c) Athanasian;

4. Teachings of the Fathers of the One and Undivided Christian Church. Both Eastern and Western Fathers are represented, with St. John of Damascus occupying the most prominent position. Only the teaching of the Fathers who do not deviate from the official teaching and position of the Church are accepted as a source of Sacred Tradition;

5. Some documents which originated after the division of the Church.

According to Timothy (Kallistos) Ware:

Christian tradition, in that case, is that faith which Jesus Christ imparted to the Apostles, and which since the Apostles' time has been handed down from generation to generation in the Church. (See Paul, I Cor. 15:3). But to an Orthodox Christian, Tradition means something more concrete and specific. It means the books of the Bible; it means Creed; it means the decrees of the Ecumenical councils and writing of the fathers; it means Canons, the Service Books, the Holy Icons - in fact, the whole system of doctrine, Church government, worship, and art which Orthodoxy has articulated over the ages. The Orthodox Christian of today sees himself as heir and guardian to a great inheritance

received from the past, and he believes that it is his duty to transmit this inheritance to the future.²⁹

The Orthodox Church considers the Holy Scriptures and Sacred Tradition to be complementary to each other. They do not, and must not, contradict one another. Until the time when the Holy Scriptures became a written document, they existed as a part of the oral tradition. Oral instructions, rather than written books, were used to instruct catechumens. But for Sacred Tradition, we would not even have the Bible itself. It may be also said that in the Orthodox Church the Holy Bible is the substance and essence of the unformulated Christian teaching, and that Sacred Tradition is the key to its formulation and interpretation. Interpretation of the Bible left to individuals, whether competent or incompetent, has led to the fragmentation of Christianity and the multiplication of heresies. The Orthodox Church and her faithful believe that:

No individual person has possessed complete purity of heart and hence complete infallibility in interpreting the word of God. However, this gift has been granted to the Church as a whole through the Spirit of Truth acting within it. In practice this means that when all or most of the Church

Fathers known for their holy lives have been consistent with one another in their explanation of some point of Scripture it has become truth to the members of the Church. It is our belief that the Bible itself, without tradition as its living interpreter, is insufficient as a source of faith.³⁰

We, the Orthodox, do not believe in freedom without order, freedom without duties, nor freedom without responsibility. We do not believe in IRRESPONSIBLE FREEDOM. Yet, exactly this kind of freedom is practiced by Protestants. Such irresponsible freedom makes possible an absurdity whereby in the most important aspect of human life, in the spiritual and religious, freedom of teaching and interpretation is given to individuals. While in all else professionalism is required and responsibility is presupposed, interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, the teaching about God, is granted to the qualified and unqualified. Whereason one hand the authority of THE CHURCH is rejected, the authority of an individual is recognized.

Orthodox teaching is based, as already mentioned, on the Holy Scriptures and Sacred Tradition, which includes the decisions of the General Councils and the teaching of the Holy Fathers who distinguished themselves by

the sanctity of their lives and who were among the most learned persons of their time. Regretfully, in Protestantism the teaching of the Holy Fathers is both neglected and rejected, whereas the teaching of even some infamous preachers, well known for their scandalous life, is accepted. If one studies carefully the history of individual Protestant sects and their founders, one discovers an astounding fact: the authority of the Apostles and Holy Fathers is rejected, while the authority of some individuals, who suddenly discovered in themselves 'divine plenipotentiaries' and founded their own 'churches', is recognized and awed. One need only remind oneself that this is what led to Jimmy Jones and David Koresh.

Whereas the Orthodox Church has preserved the teaching of God based on the Holy Scriptures and Sacred Tradition, including the decisions of the Seven General Councils and the meditation and teaching of the worthiest Christians, the Holy Fathers, those who first prepared themselves by fasting and prayers and only then dared to interpret the Holy Scriptures, in the Protestant sects the teaching is often the authority of a single person, in some cases the one who LEFT THE CHURCH because he or she failed to fulfill even the basic requirements of a true Christian.

Whereas the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church still insist that the individual should submit his or her authority to the authority of the Church, in many Protestant sects there is no authority of the Church, for there is NO CHURCH. In Protestantism, as we have already clearly shown, theology is everybody's and nobody's business.

The fragmentation of Protestantism is a direct consequence of the application of irresponsible freedom in interpretation of the Holy Scriptures when given to individuals, or usurped by them. When Protestantism granted to individuals the right to interpret the Holy Scriptures, which until then was the prerogative of the Church, it opened the door to boundless dissension, which in turn led to the divisions and fragmentations of Protestantism.

Unanimity is impossible without Church tradition and discipline. With the Protestants, however, individuals, whether educated or uneducated, allegedly 'inspired' by who knows what kind of spirit or spirits, deprived of the Church's guidance, left on their own and to themselves, insufficiently spiritualized and aware, start with the Bible and end up with some kind of their own 'Bible'. Starting from Christianity, yet without accepting it as a whole, they end with their own kind of

'Christianity' and their own 'churches'. Accepting one or several Christian principles, but rejecting all the other, gave rise to sects in which little or no genuine Christian theology is left. Rationalism transcended mysticism. Playful human reason secularized Christian spirituality, depriving it of its essential religious content. A natural by-product of such 'religion' is Man unprepared for Efforts. And, in a reciprocal process, to such a Man Protestantism had to offer a religion which is comfortable, which requires very little or no effort at all. The centuries old practices, preserved in the CHURCH, which had helped people in their spirituality and in their striving toward Christlikeness through sacraments and spiritual discipline, fasting and prayer, have been thoughtlessly abolished in Protestantism. Unlike the true Evangelists, contemporary 'evangelizers', at superbly organized and theatrically arranged mass gatherings, offer salvation at a very low price: all that is needed for salvation is one's declaration that he or she accepts Christ as a 'personal Savior'.

The corruption of Christianity in some of the so-called 'churches' is appalling. Nothing has been spared: neither the divinity of Christ, nor the sanctity of the Mother of God, nor the honor of saints, nor the authority of the CHURCH. The Bible, in the hands of

unqualified, irresponsible and, in some cases, unworthy, individuals, became the source of dissension and disunity. The Bible, left to the mercy of the judgment of the rationality of individuals, became the shelter and the lurking place of many who assail the divinity of Christ. Arianism*, condemned at the First General Council in 325, has been revived in many Protestant sects which consider themselves Christian.

Everything in the Bible that points to the divinity of Christ is considered by some sectarians and cultists as a 'myth'. Some sectarian Christians reject the faith in the Resurrection and in the coming of the Last Judgment, even though our Lord Jesus Christ spoke plainly of them. Some sectarians go so far as to deny the existence of the afterlife. Others consider baptism as unnecessary or optional. All sects reject the sacrament of confession and penance. Protestantism, as a whole, rejects fasting. Even though it is written in the bible that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself said that "this kind" (i.e., demons) can be overpowered by PRAYER AND FASTING only,

*Arianism: A Christological heresy from the beginning of the fourth century. It takes its name from its founder, Arius (ca. 256-336), a presbyter of the Church of Alexandria. Arius and his followers denied the divinity of Christ, claiming that He was not the only-begotten, but adopted, Son of God. This heresy was condemned at the First General Council held in Nicaea in 325.

Protestants have retained the prayer, but abolished the fasting.

If one thinks that this is a biased portrayal of Protestant fundamentalists, one may look at the article "Lesser Child of God", by Russel Watson (together with Martha Brant and Diana Marszalek), published in Newsweek [April 4, 1994:53-54]. It is about a so-called "Jesus Seminar" conducted by a group *"...of 77 New Testament experts who meet twice a year to deconstruct the story of Jesus and build their own version of what happened. They are sober people, and Christians themselves in most cases"*.³¹ These 'Christians' claim that Jesus was

...no more the child of God than anyone else...no virgin birth no divine nature and, most devastating, no Resurrection.... At their most recent session, in early March, the Fellows of the Seminar concluded that the Last Supper was probably just a meal, not a sacramental event, and that Gospel accounts of Judas' betrayal were 'Christian fictions'.³²

The concept of "Sacred Tradition", which is of vital importance to Orthodoxy, is usually misunderstood and maligned by the Protestants. They base their rejection of Sacred Tradition on St. Paul's admonition found in

Colossians 2:8 - *"Beware lest anyone make spoil of you through philosophy and empty deceit after the tradition of men, after the elements of the world, and not after Christ."* Other passages they often quote in support of their attitude toward Sacred Tradition include Matthew 15:3-8, Mark 7:8-9, Titus 1:14, I Peter 1:18, and Galatians 1:8-9. However, all these passages, in fact, refer to **FALSE traditions or heresies and NOT TO SACRED TRADITION.**

The Scriptural support for the Orthodox teaching concerning Sacred Tradition is quite strong. In St. Paul's Second Epistle to Thessalonians, the apostle writes: *"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and HOLD THE TRADITIONS which ye have been taught, WHETHER BY WORD or by our Epistle."* [II Thessalonians 2:15]. Other Biblical references supporting the Orthodox teaching concerning Sacred tradition are the following:

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, **AND NOT AFTER THE TRADITION** which he received from us. [II Thessalonians 3:6]

...and **KEEP THE TRADITIONS**, as I delivered them to you. [I Corinthians 11:2]

These things which ye have both learned, and received, AND HEARD, and seen in me - do. [Philippians 4:9]

And the things that thou has HEARD of me among many witnesses, the same COMMIT THOU to faithful men, who shall be able to TEACH OTHERS ALSO. [II Timothy 2:2]

Even as He DELIVERED them unto us, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having followed the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee, o most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things WHEREIN THOU HAST BEEN INSTRUCTED. [Luke 1:2-4]

The fact that not all the words and deeds of our Lord Jesus Christ were recorded in the Holy Scriptures is attested in the following passages:

And many other signs did Jesus in the presence of His disciples which ARE NOT WRITTEN IN THIS BOOK: but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. [John 20:30-31]

And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which is they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. [John 21:25]

It is written in the Bible that after His Resurrection, our Lord Jesus Christ spent FORTY days with His Apostles *"To whom also He showed himself alive after His passion by many proofs, appearing unto them for the space of forty days and SPEAKING of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God."* [Acts 1:3] Where in the Bible can one find any record of what the Lord had spoken to His Apostles during that period of FORTY DAYS. The same question could be asked in regard to the following Scriptural passages:

Therefore watch, and remember that for a space of THREE YEARS I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears. [Acts 20:31]

But without a parable spake He not unto them; AND WHEN THEY WERE ALONE HE EXPOUNDED ALL THINGS TO HIS DISCIPLES. [Mark 4:34]

And with MANY OTHER WORDS did He testify and exhort, saying, save yourselves from this untoward generation. [Acts 2:40]

And having come up, and having broken bread, and having tasted thereof, and **HAVING TALKED FOR QUITE A WHILE, UNTIL DAYBREAK**, he departed. [Acts 20:11]

It should be mentioned that at least in one case the Protestants are not consistent in rejecting Sacred Tradition. As we know, millions of Protestants go as pilgrims to the Holy Land. There they visit places related to the earthly life of our Lord Jesus Christ, His Mother, and His Apostles. They visit and pay their respect to sanctuary and church erected at the place of the Nativity of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem. They visit the church erected at the spot where Jesus Christ preached the Beatitudes. In Nazareth, they visit the house in which the Archangel Gabriel appeared to the Virgin Mary. They visit Tabor and the church erected there at the spot where the Transfiguration occurred. In Jerusalem, they visit the house in which our Lord Jesus Christ ate the Last Supper with His Apostles, the sanctuaries erected at the spots where our Lord was crucified, where He was buried and from where He resurrected. In Jerusalem, they also visit the church built at the spot from which our Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven. Yet, as we know, **the Holy Scriptures name only the general localities rather than provide the exact locations of**

events related to our Lord Jesus Christ. THE EXACT SPOTS ARE KNOWN THANKS TO THE SACRED TRADITION and, in this case, even the Protestants accept it and benefit by it.

As already stated, in the Orthodox Church the Bible is not THE ONLY source of Christian teaching. Sacred Tradition and the teachings of the Holy Fathers are accepted as sources of teaching, but only if they do not contradict the Bible. However, the Orthodox Church accepts and uses THE ENTIRE BIBLE, from the first to the last verse and word. Orthodox believers strive to change themselves to fulfill the Scriptural precepts and they keep the Bible WHOLE and UNALTERED. As for Protestants, for whom the Bible is the ONLY SOURCE of Christian teaching, they accept from the Bible that which is in agreement with their Protestant teaching and reject everything in the Bible that does not agree with it. Burdened with extreme rationalism, Protestantism does not seek the Christlikeness of man, but seeks instead the Man-likeness of God. For that reason, in some Protestant sects, all the divine properties of God have been denied; rejected are miracles and anything that is mystical and beyond the grasp of an individuals' reason. Truly, the faith of many Protestants embraces only as much as their human reason can accept.

Protestantism as a whole, as well as its factions, reminds one of the painter who, in order to please his critics, kept changing his painting according to the taste of each individual critic. At the end, nothing of the original painting was left! Similarly, Protestantism, depending too much on the taste of the public, 'paints' God according to the taste of individuals.

The Orthodox Church believes that God is unknown in His *essence*, but that He is revealed in His *actions* and in His *divine energies*. To us He is known to the extent that He is a living and acting God. In Eastern theology, the Divine Persons are clearly distinguished without being opposed. According to the theology of the Orthodox Church "*...the Being God is the absolute unity of His attributes and properties, in one living whole, without contradiction or actual distinction of the parts*".³³

Jesus Christ is the only begotten son of the Father, the true God and the second Person of the Holy Trinity. As the late Fr. John Meyendorff wrote: "*While remaining absolutely transcendent and incomprehensible, God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, who participated in creating and is con-substantial with the Father*".³⁴ The essence of

Christology has been formulated in following six articles (numbers 2 - 7) of the Nicene Creed:

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages; Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father, by Whom all things were made;

Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary, and became man;

He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried, and arose on the third day, according to the Scriptures;

And ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of the Father;

And He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, of Whose Kingdom there is no end.

These principles of faith concerning Jesus Christ are also presented in the writings of the Holy Fathers and in the liturgical hymns of the Orthodox Church.

The essential dogmatic teaching of the Orthodox Church concerning the Holy Spirit is also formulated in the eighth article of the Nicene Creed, in the writings of the Holy Fathers and in Orthodox hymnody. The Church believes that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone, and He vivifies all of creation and enlightens the Church. He is present everywhere and He fills all things. He spoke through the prophets and He also participated in the creation of the Church, whose beginning was marked by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles on Pentecost.

At the First and Second General Councils, held in 325 in Nicaea and in 381 in Constantinople respectively, the NICENE CREED was formulated by all the Fathers attending these councils. These Fathers represented the entire, undivided Christian Church. Article 8 of the Nicene Creed, as originally formulated, reads:

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life, WHO PROCEEDS FROM THE FATHER, who together with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, and who spoke by the prophets.

The Fathers who attended the Councils at *which the Creed was formulated had agreed* that NOT EVEN AN IOTA should ever be changed in the wording of the Creed. However, first the Roman Catholic Church and then the Protestant church added the words implying that the Holy Spirit proceeds not only from the Father, but also "FROM THE SON". In Latin this phrase reads "PATER FILIO QUE", thereby becoming known as the "Filioque" controversy. It also clearly represents an innovation by the Western churches. Only the Orthodox Church maintains the ORIGINAL NICENE CREED. Scriptural support for the Orthodox dogmatic position concerning this matter is the following: "*But when the Comforter cometh, the Spirit of Truth, WHO PROCEEDETH FROM THE FATHER, He shall bear witness of me.*" [John 15:26]

The Mother of God enjoys a high respect among the Orthodox faithful, but no worship is offered to her, for that belongs to God alone. She is respected as the Mother of God and that is clearly emphasized by her portrayal on icons: she is most often depicted as the Mother holding the child Jesus Christ in her arms. In all the Orthodox churches she is referred to by her title, **Theotokos, Bogorodica (Bogodroditsa)**, rather than by

her name - Mary. The Orthodox Church guards herself from both elevating her higher or placing her lower than where God has placed her.

The Orthodox Church does not accept the Catholic dogma of 1854 - the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, in the sense that she was exempted at birth from original sin. This would separate her from the human race, and she would then have been unable to transmit to her son this true humanity.³⁵

The cult of saints in the Orthodox Church reflects the belief that seemingly unattainable Christian ideals can be achieved by human beings. She believes that all Christians are saints by grace, but that the Christian heroes, who are known as saints, manifested their sainthood by their lives and deeds. *"For the Eastern Church the saints are the authentic witnesses to God's actual presence amongst His people and the heralds of the world to come."*³⁶

The cult of saints is the optimistic creed of Orthodoxy by which it proclaims the limitation of the power of death and the eternity of life. Moreover, the cult of saints signifies the recognition of spiritual achievements and

provides a source of education and inspiration for Orthodox Christians. Finally, the cult of saints is the rejection of gloom and pessimism of predestination. The cult of saints reflects the respect and love the Orthodox faithful feel for saints who are spiritual heroes who lived a life pleasing to God and were glorified by Him.

For the Orthodox, and for the Roman Catholics, too, saints are the bright side of the history of Christianity, proofs of the feasibility of achieving Christlikeness, landmarks of the achievement of Christlikeness, inspirations towards which we strive. This again is opposed to the self-containment of Protestantism. Finally, the cult of saints is a far better source of inspiration than that represented by contemporary popular figures whose posters we have all seen...

Protestants disapprove of the Orthodox practice of praying for others and asking prayers of others, including saints and the Mother of God. Yet, there are so many references in the Bible proving that from the inception of Christianity individuals prayed for others and asked others to pray for them. There are Scriptural records of individuals being healed, and even resurrected, because of the prayers of their parents or friends. Let

us mention the epileptic boy [Luke 9:38-43], the daughter of the woman from Canaan [Matthew 15:22-28], the servant of the centurion [Matthew 8:5-13], the paralyzed man [Luke 5:18-25] and the daughter of Jairus [Mark 5:22-23; 35-43].

There is no doubt that the Apostles prayed for one another and for various other individuals. We have the example of St. Apostle Paul who writes about his prayers for others [Colossians 1:9; I Thessalonians 5:23; II Thessalonians 1:11] and his asking others to pray for him [I Thessalonians 5:25; II Thessalonians 3:1; Hebrews 13:18, etc.]. Then, we also have the instruction of St. Apostle James who urged us to pray one for another [James 5:16]. Protestants, who object to the Orthodox custom of asking the Mother of God and the saints for intercessions, do however ask their ministers to pray for them - and the latter do it.

Protestantism teaches that man does not need any intermediaries for his relationship with God. On the other hand, the Orthodox faithful believe that praying for others is an expression of love and concern for them. Togetherness, a characteristic of the true Church, is reflected even in this mutual praying one for another. Individualistic concern

for self alone, so much emphasized especially in fundamentalist sects, has no place in Orthodoxy. As for asking the Mother of God and the saints for intercession, it should be understandable considering that they are closer to God than are we. Besides, let us speak frankly, we Orthodox would rather ask the Mother of God and the saints to pray for us than the likes of Jimmy Bakker, Swaggert, Jim Jones, David Koresh and their like.

As is to be expected, Protestants, who object to the cult of saints, are even more upset with the cult of relics of saints. They fail to see that it is a continuation of the ancient Christian custom. From the earliest days of Christianity and the Church, Christians would assemble at the graves of the martyrs to hold their church services. Later, instead of gathering at the graves of martyrs, Christians introduced the practice of having particles of the relics of some saint sewn into the corporal ("antimins"), an item indispensable for the officiation of the Divine Liturgy. Indirectly, this reflects the fact that the Church of Christ was indeed built upon the relics of His saints and martyrs, without whose sacrifice the Church would not have been built. It is necessary, however, to mention that the rules pertaining to the veneration of icons apply to the veneration of the relics of saints:

they can be **honored, but never worshiped**. And once again, while the Protestants do not understand and appreciate the veneration of the relics of saints, let us point out that it is acceptable for them to pay their respects and show honor to the tombs of Lincoln, or Washington, or some other historical figure.

The use of icons is another feature characteristic for the Orthodox Church, but rather foreign to Roman Catholics and especially Protestants, who are the perpetuators of the iconoclastic folly. At the Seventh General Council, held in 787, the **UNIVERSAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH**, that is the Church before her division in 1054, approved the use of icons in churches and homes. Iconoclasts of the past, the progenitors of modern-day iconoclasts - the Protestants - defied the decision of the General Council, the **HIGHEST AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH**. What Iconoclasts of the past and present cannot grasp is that

The purpose of iconography in the Church was, from the beginning, one: service to the Church. Iconography appeared as art not for its own sake, but for the Church. Thus, its content was determined directly by the needs and the profounder purpose of the Church.³⁷

Icons are not pictures or portraits. The content of the icon is always strictly religious and essentially theological. The icon is a form of THEOPHANY and a means of ORTHODOX THEOLOGY. Although the presence of icons in Orthodox churches does contribute to an atmosphere conducive to worship and piety, they are not there for decorative purposes or for an esthetically pleasing effect. Their function is primarily instructional and inspirational. The icon, according to Sergei Bulgakov, *"...is religious contemplation re clothed in images, colours and forms. It is a revelation under artistic form; it is not an abstract idea but concrete form."*³⁸

The icon is an attempt to portray spirituality and give a visible form to religious concepts. The icon is a religious monument, a historical record, a means of religious education and inspiration and a weapon in the struggle against Arianism and Monophysitism*. The icon is an integral part of the Orthodox liturgy as is seen by the following quote: *"...whatever is taught by the Divine Liturgy, by the hymns of the Church and words from the pulpit, is excellently commented upon by the silence of iconography."*³⁹

*Monophysitism: (*monos* = one; *physis* = nature). Christological heresy according to which Jesus Christ had only one nature, the divine but no human. This heresy was condemned at the Fourth General Council in Chalcedon in 451.

Most simply expressed, **THE ICON IS ORTHODOX THEOLOGY IN VISIBLE FORM.** The icon is an instrument of Orthodoxy, because, as Leontius of Napolis (+ 650) expressed, icons are

...OPEN BOOKS REMINDING US OF GOD. Whereas to an idolater the image itself is his or her god, and is itself an object of worship, for Orthodox Christians "Beside the Triune God, there is no other object of divine worship, but homage (hyperdoulia) may be paid to the Virgin Mary and reverence (doulia) to the saints and to their icons and relics".⁴⁰

Together with St. John of Damascus, a staunch defender of icons during the iconoclast period, Orthodox Christians believe that: *"The icon is a song of triumph, and a revelation, and an enduring monument to the victory of the saints and the disgrace of the demons."*⁴¹

Protestants also disapprove of the veneration of angels - **THE MINISTERS OF GOD**, but do not hesitate to often revere their own preachers, even when they are far from angelic. They also object to the Orthodox venerating the Holy Cross, forgetting the words of St. Paul: *"For the preaching of the cross is TO*

THEM THAT PERISH foolishness; but unto us which ARE SAVED IT IS THE POWER OF GOD."
[I Corinthians 1:18] They should also carefully consider the following Scriptural passages:

But God forbid that I should glory,
SAVE IN THE CROSS OF OUR LORD
JESUS CHRIST by whom the world is
crucified unto me, and I unto the world.
[Galatians 6:14]

And that He might reconcile both unto
God in one body BY THE CROSS, having
slain the enemy thereby. [Ephesians 2:16]

FOR MANY WALK, OF WHOM I HAVE
TOLD YOU OFTEN, AND NOW TELL
YOU EVEN WEeping, THAT THEY ARE
THE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF
CHRIST, WHOSE END IS DESTRUCTION,
WHOSE GOD IS THEIR BELLY,
AND WHOSE GLORY IS IN THEIR
SHAME, WHO MIND EARTHLY THINGS.
[Philippians, 3:18-19]

Protestant aversion for the use of incense has no support in the scriptures. In fact, we find a number of passages mentioning the use of incense in the Church or as a gift to Christ [Psalm 141:2; Matthew 2:11; Exodus 40:27; Luke 1:9; Revelation 5:8].

The Protestant teaching that human beings are saved by grace THROUGH FAITH ALONE requires special attention and is based on the following Scriptural passage: *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast."* [Ephesians 2:8-9] There are other passages in the Bible expressing a similar idea and Protestants quote them, again and again.

Were the Protestants to strictly adhere to their teaching, the consequence would be the following: human beings could do nothing for their own salvation, consequently, their thoughts, words and deeds are irrelevant and they, therefore, could do whatever pleases them. According to the Protestants, salvation is an exclusive act of God; man, who is the object of salvation, is, nevertheless, somehow outside the act of salvation. By accepting this teaching, not only may we understand - or even justify! - man's passivity in doing good, but also his activity in committing evil.

Nobody can or wishes to argue the extraordinary importance of faith, which is and has to be the source of our deeds, words and thoughts. However, we, the Orthodox, believe that God has not only provided the possibility, but also given the task to man to actively participate in his own salvation. Faith

is, indubitably, indispensable for salvation. However, faith without good deeds is inconceivable, or, as Apostle James teaches, it is dead. Salvation, although essentially a divine act, presupposes and also includes man's activity. As fire without heat is inconceivable, so too genuine faith without good deeds is unthinkable. The Orthodox Church believes that we are indeed saved by the grace of God through faith, but that our deeds are the confirmation of our faith. The faith is the SEED, and deeds are the FRUIT. There is no fruit without the seed, but a seed that brings no fruit is faulty. Salvation cannot be bought at any price, not even by our deeds, yet our deeds are our YES to the Lord who wants to save us.

It may also be mentioned that in Orthodoxy faith is more binding than in Protestantism. An Orthodox believer is expected and required to accept THE ENTIRE ORTHODOX TEACHING in order to qualify as an Orthodox Christian. He is expected and required to conform his views and his life to Orthodoxy, which is unanimous, defined and unalterable. On the other hand, a Protestant believes only as much as he wants. Everything that appears to him as mystical and ineffable, he rejects, and he selects and joins the sect in which he will be considered a Christian with whatever minimum of faith and discipline he may be comfortable.

In a number of parables told by our Lord Jesus Christ, it is the ACTION rather than the faith of those in the parable that is either approved or condemned. This is easy to verify by reading any of Christ's parables, but, in particular, the following: King's Son Wedding [Matthew 22:2-14]; Ten Virgins [Matthew 25:1-13]; Rich Fool [Luke 12:16-21]; Prodigal Son [Luke 15:11-32]; Wealthy Man and Lazarus [Luke 16:19-31].

One wonders if Protestants ever read and understand Matthew 25:31-46. There, in a parable, the Lord Jesus Christ depicted the Last Judgment. To those on the right hand side (those who were saved), Jesus Christ explained the reason why they were rewarded and saved: *"For I was hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me."* [Matthew 25:34-36]. **Not a single word was said about faith.** The reward was FOR ACTS OF MERCY, and the punishment was also earned by FAILING TO DO THE ACTS OF MERCY [Matthew 25:41-46]. For, as Apostle James pointed out: *"For he shall have judgment without mercy, that has showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment."* [James 2:13] Further, the same Apostle wrote:

Even so faith, IF IT HATH NO WORKS,
IS DEAD, being alone. Yea, a man may
say, Thou hast faith, and I have works;
show me thy faith without the works, and
I WILL SHOW THEE MY FAITH BY MY
WORKS. Thou believest that there is one
God; thou doest well: THE DEVILS ALSO
BELIEVE, AND TREMBLE. But wilt thou
know, O VAIN MAN, THAT FAITH WITH-
OUT WORKS IS DEAD? [James 2:17-20].



Let us now consider the question of sacraments. There are seven sacraments in the Orthodox Church: Baptism, Chrismation or Anointment, Confession or Penance, Holy Eucharist, Matrimony, Holy Unction and Ordination of the Clergy. The number of sacraments in the Roman Catholic Church is also seven. As for the Protestants, the number of sacraments they practice may be as few as none or as many as four.

In the Orthodox Church sacraments may be administered only by canonically ordained bishops and priests. A canonically ordained priest may administer Baptism, Chrismation, Confession, Holy Communion, Matrimony and Holy Unction. Ordination of the Clergy

can be administered only by bishops. Baptism, Chrismation, Confession and Holy Communion are sacraments obligatory for all Orthodox Christians. Anointment is administered to the sick as an Orthodox "healing service" or, if that be the will of God, as preparation for their passing away. Holy Matrimony is the sacrament administered for those Orthodox faithful who decide to get married. Ordination is administered for men who qualify to be clergy of the Orthodox Church.

The theory of the Protestants' church that the seven sacraments cannot be accepted since the New Testament does not explicitly define them as seven in number, is false, because there is no explicit reference in the Bible to the fact that there are only two of them.⁴²

There is evidence in the New Testament indicating that seven sacraments have been instituted either by Jesus Christ Himself (Baptism and the Eucharist, i.e., Holy Communion), or by His Apostles (Chrismation, Confession and forgiving of sins, Matrimony, Ordination and Holy Unction) and by His authority. [See, Matthew 28:18-20.] Below are other references in the Bible concerning each of the seven Sacraments.

BAPTISM. This sacrament was instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He ordered His Apostles: *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."* [Matthew 28-19] He also said:

He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be damned. [Mark 16:16].

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. [John 3:5]

Christ Himself was baptized by St. John the Forerunner [Matthew 3:13-17]. Christ Himself did not baptize anyone [John 4:1-2], although some believe that He did baptize His apostles. As for His apostles, they did baptize [see Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:11, 22].

Baptism is the initiation into Christianity. In the Orthodox Church, no other sacrament can be administered to a person who has not been baptized. Article 10 of the Nicene Creed specifies: *"I acknowledge ONE baptism for the remission of sins."*

The baptism of infants is practiced both in the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church, but such baptism is opposed by Baptists and some other fundamentalists. They base their opposition on the statement in Mark 16:16. However, if baptism is a condition of salvation, what happens to unbaptized infants and other children? Are they saved? It is understandable that at the beginning of Christianity ADULTS had to profess their belief in Christ in order to qualify for baptism. However, very early in the development of Christianity, CHILDREN OF THE BELIEVING PARENTS were baptized. Moreover, there is NOT A SINGLE REFERENCE IN THE BIBLE WHICH EXPLICITLY FORBIDS the baptism of infants. On the other hand, there are several references in the Scriptures indicating that the Apostles baptized a NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS, and one may assume that at least some of these households included children, too. Here are some examples of whole household being baptized: 1) Lydia from Thyatira and her household [Acts 16:14-15]; 2) Stephen and his household [I Corinthians 1:16]; 3) the warden of the prison and his household [Acts 16:33]; 4) Chespus and his household [Acts 18:8].

Apostle Peter asked: *"Can any man forbid water?"* [Acts 10:47] - and here the word "water" signifies baptism. Those who oppose

the baptism of infants argue that infants and children cannot understand what is happening and, therefore, should not be baptized. One must then ask them: What of those who are physically of an age, but who are **mentally children and will always remain children**? One must also ask them: DOES THE RECEPTION OF THE GRACE OF GOD DEPEND ON OUR UNDERSTANDING? DO WE UNDERSTAND OTHER SACRAMENTS? Do we **understand** how the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ?

In view of the fact that an infant or child cannot PROFESS his or her FAITH, the Church has instituted sponsorship (kumstvo). At the baptism of a child, the sponsor, man or woman (kum or kuma), RECITES THE CREED (PROFESSION OF FAITH) on behalf of the child. The sponsor also promises to help the child be raised as a believing Orthodox Christian.

In the Orthodox Church the correct manner of baptism is by immersion, as it was done in the Christian Church from the very beginning. Baptism has to be done IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT in order to be valid.

CHRISMATION. In the Orthodox Church this sacrament is administered immediately after the baptism, on the same occasion. This

is in accordance with the words of Christ: *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born of WATER and of the SPIRIT, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God."* [John 3:5] Thus, in the Orthodox Church, the baptized person **SIMULTANEOUSLY** receives the **BAPTISM OF WATER** (Baptism) and the **BAPTISM OF SPIRIT** (Chrismation).

In the Roman Catholic Church this sacrament became the "confirmation in faith" administered by a bishop for children who are at least twelve years old. Protestants do not have this sacrament. In the Orthodox Church, the chrismated person receives through this sacrament **THE SEAL OF THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**. It should be mentioned that long before the "charismatic movements" 'discovered' the Holy Spirit and His gifts, the Holy Spirit has been present in the Orthodox Church and received by each and every individual Orthodox at his or her Chrismation. The Biblical source of this sacrament is the following: *"Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us with you in Christ, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given us earnest of the Spirit in our heart."* [II Corinthians 1:21-22]

CONFESSION (Penance, Receiving Forgiveness of Sins). From the time our Lord Jesus Christ began to preach, He demanded:

“Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” [Matthew 4:17] To His apostles He said: “Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.” [Matthew 18:18]

Bishops and priests received this authority to bind and/or loose sins from the Apostles, as their heirs. In the Gospel of St. John we read: *“Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.” [20:23]* In the Acts of the Apostles [3:19] we read: *“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”* Saint James also urges Christians to *“Confess your faults to one another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.” [St. James 5:16]*

Confession should be preceded by meditation and followed by repentance. Simply admitting one's faults, without changing one's way of life and behavior, is not beneficial for the one who goes to confession. One should also remember that there are sins of COMMISSION (doing wrong) and sins of OMISSION (failing to do good). It should also be pointed out that transgressions can be made by words, deeds and thoughts, and they can be committed

against God, against other human beings, and against oneself.

Finally, one should realize that through **CONFESSION AND REPENTANCE**, as well as the **RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION**, we Orthodox are **BEING BORN AGAIN** (John 3:3). Those sectarians who talk to Orthodox Christians about being born again should know that we are not only born **AGAIN**, but we are born **AGAIN, AGAIN and AGAIN**. Every time we confess our sins and cleanse ourselves from them and every time we receive **CHRIST** through Holy Communion, we are being **BORN AGAIN**.

EUCCHARIST (Holy Communion). This sacrament was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and this is referred to in Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:17-20; John 6:53-56; and, I Corinthians 11:23-26.

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to His disciples, and said, **TAKE, EAT, THIS IS MY BODY**. And He took cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying: drink ye **ALL** of it; **THIS IS MY BLOOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT** which is shed for many for the remission of sins. [Matthew 26:26-28]

Although the Lord said that the bread IS His body and that the wine IS His blood, most of the Protestant denominations DO NOT believe in transubstantiation (the change of the bread into Christ's body and the wine into Christ's blood), but consider bread and wine as just bread and wine and receive them only 'in remembrance'. The word remembrance is mentioned in Luke 22:19, yet in that passage, too, the Lord says that the bread IS His "body" and that the wine "IS the New Testament IN HIS BLOOD".

And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying: "THIS IS MY BODY, which is given to you; this do in remembrance of me." Likewise, also the cup after supper saying: "this cup IS the New Testament IN MY BLOOD, which is shed for you." [Luke 22:19-20]

Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians: *"This cup of blessing which we bless IS IT NOT THE COMMUNION OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST? The bread which we break IS IT NOT THE COMMUNION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST?"* [I Corinthians 10:16]

In Matthew 26:27, the Lord said: *"Drink ye ALL of it..."*, but in the Roman Catholic Church only the clergy were allowed to receive Holy Communion in both aspects.

At the beginning, the entire Christian Church, including the Church of Rome, used leavened bread for Holy Communion. Later, the use of unleavened bread was introduced in the Roman Catholic Church.

Historically, unleavened bread ("matzos") was eaten by the Jews for seven days beginning with March 15th, in preparation for Jewish Passover. Since Christ is THE BREAD OF LIFE and the NEW PASCHA (Passover), the Christians used leavened bread in distinction from the Jews. At the time that our Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles ate bread at the Last Supper, they were RECLINING, whereas the Passover bread ("azymes") and lamb had to be eaten in the standing position and with loins girded according to tradition. Our Lord expired on the cross at the ninth hour ON FRIDAY and, therefore, He and His apostles **could not have eaten** "azymes", or unleavened bread, at the Last Supper. Therefore, for all these reasons, the Orthodox Church continues the practice of the ancient, genuine Christian Church in using leavened bread for Holy Communion.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that transubstantiation takes place at the moment when the priest utters the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: *"Take, eat, this is my body..."* [Matthew 26:26] and *"Drink ye all of*

it: for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." [Matthew 26:27-28].

The Orthodox Church believes and teaches that transubstantiation takes place after the priest invokes the Holy Spirit, praying Him to effect the transubstantiation. After the invocation, the priest blesses the bread, saying: *"And make this bread the precious Body of your Christ."* Then he blesses the wine in the chalice, saying: *And that which is in this chalice, the precious blood of your Christ."* Then making the sign of the cross over both, the paten on which is the bread and the chalice containing wine, he prays: **"CHANGING THEM BOTH BY THY HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN. AMEN. AMEN."** At that moment the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Orthodox Church has for centuries required of Orthodox Christians that, in order to prepare themselves for receiving Holy Communion, they practice abstinence, intense spirituality, examine their conscience, confess and repent. Preparation in the Roman Catholic Church has been lately reduced to TWO HOURS prior to receiving Holy Communion, while in the Protestant denominations there is no preparation whatsoever because this is actually not a sacrament for

them, but an 'act of remembrance'. Yet, Apostle Paul warned all those who are to receive Holy Communion:

For as often as ye eat THIS BREAD and drink THIS CUP, ye do show the Lord's death till He come. Wherefore WHOSOEVER SHALLEAT THIS BREAD, AND DRINK THIS CUP OF THE LORD UNWORTHILY, SHALL BE GUILTY OF THE BODY AND BLOOD OF THE LORD. But let a man EXAMINE himself, and so let him eat of THAT BREAD, and drink of THAT CUP. For he that EATETH AND DRINKETH UNWORTHILY, EATETH AND DRINKETH DAMNATION TO HIMSELF, NOT DISCERNING THE LORD'S BODY. [I Corinthians 11:26-29]

Regretfully, due to ignorance or spiritual laxity lately even some Orthodox churches here in the United States have adopted Roman Catholic and Protestant practices and have dispensed of the traditional Orthodox preparation for Holy Communion, or reduced this preparation to a minimum.

MATRIMONY. In the Orthodox Church marriage is not just a contract between two persons but a **sacrament** through which the marriage is sanctified by God. At the wedding

ceremony, the actual mystery of the two becoming one occurs when the priest says: *"O LORD OUR GOD, CROWN THEM WITH HONOR AND GLORY."* Unlike a civil ceremony in which the marriage is performed by an individual who accomplishes this "by the authority invested in him", in the Orthodox Church the marriage is sanctified by God and His authority.

By His presence at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, where He performed His first miracle, Jesus Christ sanctified the institution of matrimony. [John 2:1-11] St. Apostle Paul wrote on the subject of matrimony *"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two will be made one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church."* [Ephesians 5:31-32] He also wrote in another Epistle: *"Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."* [Hebrews 13:4]

HOLY UNCTION. In the Roman Catholic Church this sacrament is referred to as "the last unction" or "extreme unction" and is administered to the dying. However, the purpose of this sacrament is clearly defined in the Scriptures:

Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, ANOINTING HIM WITH OIL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; and the prayer of the faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. [James 5:14-15]

Clearly, the sacrament of Holy Unction was instituted for HEALING and FORGIVENESS OF SINS, rather than for preparation for death. It should also be noted that in the Roman Catholic Church this sacrament is administered even on the deceased, whereas in the Orthodox Church SACRAMENTS can be administered only to the LIVING, as was the practice in the early Church. The Protestants do not have this sacrament.

PRIESTHOOD (Ordination of Clergy). In the Old as well as in the New Testament, ordination was done by the laying on of hands. Only bishops are entitled to ordain the clergy. The basis for this rule we find in the Epistle to the Hebrews by St. Apostle Paul, who warns: *"And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called by God, AS AARON WAS."* [Hebrews 5:4] One may recall that Aaron was a High Priest, a position similar to a bishop.

From the Bible we know that our Lord Jesus Christ ordained His twelve apostles: *"And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils."* [Mark 3:14-15; see also Matthew 10:1] Christ's apostles administered ordination of the clergy, as we see from Act of the Apostles 6:5-6.

...and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmanas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch, whom they set before the Apostles; and when they had prayed, THEY LAID THEIR HANDS ON THEM.

Christ's Apostles ordained their successors, as we see from the Act of Apostles 6:5-6 and in several other places in the New Testament. The latter then ordained their successors. This process - APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION - has been maintained in the Orthodox Church to the present day and is yet another factor which shows her to be the genuine Christian Church. No Protestant denomination has Apostolic Succession.

The three priestly orders, i.e., bishops, priest and deacons, are expressly mentioned

in the Bible. St. Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: *"There is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a BISHOP, he desireth a good work."* [I Timothy 3:1] He also lists the qualifications for someone who wants to be a bishop: *"A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach..."* [I Timothy 3:1]

The office of presbyters (priests) is also mentioned in a letter of St. Paul to Timothy: *"Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery."* [I Timothy 4:14]

The reference to the office of deacon which comes from Acts of the Apostles 6:5-6 has already been made above. There is also a reference in I Timothy 3:8-10:

Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.

The term **Elder** is applied in the Scriptures in some cases to bishops and in others to priests, who are also mentioned as shepherds.

See, for example, Acts 15:4, 6; Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17; I Timothy 5:17; I Peter 5:1-4.



With this let us conclude the discussion of the sacraments and address church services. Orthodox church services are characterized by beauty, solemnity and religious realism, the latter meaning that a church service in the Orthodox Church represents **the actualization rather than the commemoration of the religious reality**. The distinction between the past, present and future is removed in the church services and everywhere and everything is at the same time something that was, is, and will be. Guillou observes that

The whole spiritual life in the Orthodox Church is bound up with the great theological themes of the patristic age. Her liturgy has simply taken the theology elaborated by the Fathers and by the councils up to the ninth century, and incorporated it closely into liturgical life.⁴³

Even non-Orthodox people who have ever attended the Orthodox Divine Liturgy are often moved by its beauty, because:

The atmosphere of sacredness, the continual dwelling on the great truths of faith and the most essential spiritual aspects, evoked by chants that are often known to everybody, makes the Byzantine liturgy (which is always sung, not recited) a wonderful vehicle of Christological and Trinitarian teaching. The Church is thus realized as a living presence, feeding her children on these things that set forth her authentic tradition, the texts of the liturgy and the writings of the Fathers.⁴⁴

Those non-Orthodox individuals who not only attended the liturgy, but made an effort to study it, will certainly agree with Guillou who concluded: *"Better than anything else the Fathers and the Byzantine liturgy give us a sense of the divine transcendence, transcendence that is only underlined by the self-abasement of Him who made Himself lowly for our sake."*⁴⁵

The variety of church services in the Orthodox Church is considerable. All together, there are eight (usually combined, however, thereby fitting into 3 services) church services which should be offered within the period of twenty-four hours. These are: Vespers, Midnight service, Matins, four Hours and the Divine Liturgy.

The Eastern liturgy is wholly rooted in God's written word: it makes use of the **WHOLE Bible** (with the unfortunate exception of Apocalypse) for the interpretation of the stages in the mystery of salvation from a Christological standpoint.⁴⁶

The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom of the 4th century is officiated throughout the year, except on ten occasions when the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great, also from the 4th century, is celebrated. These ten occasions are: five Sundays during Great (Easter) Lent, Holy Thursday, Holy Saturday, the Eve of the Nativity of Christ, the Eve of Theophany and on January 1 (January 14, new style calendar), when St. Basil is commemorated. There is also a third liturgy, the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts which is officiated on Wednesdays and Fridays during Great Lent. In some parishes and monasteries, it is also celebrated on Mondays. The authorship of this liturgy is attributed to St. Gregory, but, in fact, he only recorded it. Three other ancient liturgies, one of St. James, the other by St. Mark and the third by St. Peter, are no longer in general use, although the Liturgy of St. James is sometimes officiated in some places on the Feast Day of St. James.

All church services in the Orthodox Church include in their structure hymns and prayers containing theological messages and instructions. By attending church services, the Orthodox faithful are exposed not only to the beauty of the worship, but also to the truths of their faith. The enlightening impact of the liturgy was pointed out by Guillou:

All that fashions his religious character and nourishes his life the Eastern Christian receives FROM the Church and IN the Church. The spiritual climate in which he grows and expands is ecclesial and liturgical: in it he is constantly in touch with the fundamental truths of Christian life, and particularly with the great dogmas concerning the Blessed Trinity and Jesus Christ; he lives and breaths in the biblical atmosphere of Christianity, which does not come to him in any abstract form but concretely, made real and living in public worship, and it soon becomes native to him.⁴⁷

In Orthodoxy, the Church herself is considered to be a source and an object of faith. She is a spiritual experience as much as she is an institution. The Church is the Body of Christ, her Founder, and she is the *"fullness of Him that filleth all in all"* [Ephesians 1:23]. By her nature, the Church is both visible and invisible, divine

and human, heavenly and earthly. V. Lossky spoke of the Church as a **theandric** organism (**theos** = God, **andros** = man), which in her Christological aspect *"appears as having two natures, two operations, and two wills."*⁴⁸

The church or *"ecclesiastical being as such"*, as she is sometimes referred to, is considered by Orthodox ecclesiology to be *"something extremely complex; it is not of this world, though taken from the midst of the world; it exists in the world and for the world."*⁴⁹ In her invisible aspect, the Church is

...the bearer of divine gifts and powers, and is engaged in transforming mankind into the Kingdom of God. As visible, she is constituted of men professing a common faith, observing common customs, and using visible means of grace.⁵⁰

The official ecclesiological definition of the Church and her essential qualities is presented in the ninth article of the Nicene Creed. According to that dogmatic formulation the Church is **ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC and APOSTOLIC**. She is **ONE** because

She is one in origin, one in Faith and discipline, and one in essence. All her members constitute one body, are animated

by the one Holy Spirit and profess alike one single identical faith, which is the bond uniting them to each other and to their Lord.⁵¹

(The internal and integral unity of the church is not affected or contradicted by the existence of individuals and groups outside of her who do not profess the same faith.)

The Orthodox Church is HOLY because her Founder is holy and her mission is also holy. She is sanctified by Christ and, in turn, she sanctifies her members.

As an actual fact the Church begets Saints - the heroes of the faith who demonstrate her capacity for the sanctification of humanity. The fact that there are sinners, hypocrites, and false members in the church does not militate against her character as holy, for her task is always to inspire and stimulate all that leads to holiness among her children, though she retains unworthy members, hoping for their amendment.⁵²

The Church is also holy because the Holy Spirit dwells in her, illumines her, and sanctifies her.

The task of the Church has always been to assist her members in achieving the ultimate goal and meaning of their existence: **CHRISTLIKENESS**. The role and the mission of the Church is to proclaim and maintain the road to salvation. In other words, the duty of the Church is to preserve the spiritual standards by maintaining unchangeable Christian principles. One would, therefore, expect the people to adapt their life to those principles, rather than to try to make these principles fit their narrow human frame of vision. In the Church, the direction of movement has to be from the human toward the divine.

In view of the fact that the term **Catholic** is used as a constant part of the title of the Roman Catholic Church, some Orthodox believers are reluctant to use that term when referring to the Orthodox Church. Instead, they use the terms **universal** and **oecumenical**.

The term **catholic** is translated in the Slavic languages with a very expressive word, **sobornaia** (**saborna**, in Serbian). The "catholicity", that is the universality of the Orthodox Church, is not a mere claim of having adherents everywhere in the known world, but also her proclamation of togetherness,

unanimity, synthesis of authority, responsible liberty guided by all-binding love, all those qualities meaning “catholicity” and being manifestations of “catholicity”. For the Orthodox Church qualitative rather than quantitative catholicity is primary. Because of her truly catholic nature, the Orthodox Church believes that the possession of truth in Orthodoxy is collective rather than individual, although the proclaiming of truth is the competency of the supreme ecclesiastical authority. Characteristic for the Orthodox Church and her catholicity is her attitude toward the freedom of the individual members in the Church. The basically Protestant attitude of placing individual subjectivity above the collective objectivity of the Church is unacceptable to the Orthodox Church.

The Orthodox Church is **Apostolic** because she has been built: *“upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.”* [Ephesians 2:20] Her apostolic character is also based upon the fact that she teaches in accordance with the apostolic tradition and she perpetuates the apostolic mission and succession, the latter regarded as both the means for the transmission of Apostolic teaching as well as the distinguishing mark of the TRUE CHURCH, separating it from the false.

The Orthodox Church is also Apostolic in the sense that she is missionary in character and because she is accomplishing the original mission of the Apostles - to Christianize the entire world. As Guillou aptly stated:

Through her communal mystical experience, grounded in the Bible, expounded by the Fathers within the liturgical and sacramental action, the Orthodox Church gives living witness to divinization of what is human and to the transfiguration of the cosmos, a veritable extension of Christ's Incarnation through the effective presence of the Spirit. She is conscious of being still - over and above all human deficiencies - a missionary Church, for in the light of God she shows forth His work in all its fullness, seeking to transfigure the WHOLE of mankind and the WHOLE of the world.⁵³

The Orthodox Church is hierarchical in structure. Her hierarchy is constituted of the deacons, priests and bishops. All bishops are equal in rank among themselves, although some of them have special titles, such as Archbishop, Metropolitan or Patriarch. These titles reflect the particular position and responsibility that their bearers have, rather than a higher rank, because in the Orthodox Church there is no higher rank than bishop.

Bishops, who as a rule are elected from among the monks, have to be celibate. The secular clergy, unlike the monastic, are allowed to marry PRIOR TO ORDINATION, and never again. As for the Roman Catholic Church, it introduced the requirement of celibacy for her priests. The celibacy of the Roman Catholic clergy was first instituted in the eleventh century by Pope Gregory VII. It has no support in the Bible or in Sacred Tradition. On the other hand, in the Protestant church the clergy, including bishops, may get married, divorced, and remarried.

The fact that the Orthodox Church is not monolithic in structure, that is, that she has no particular spokesman for the whole Church and no single center from which ecclesiastical policies and pronouncements would be made, is interpreted by some as a sign of disunity. Similarly, there are persons prone to mistake the plurality within the Orthodox Church for disunity.

The Orthodox Church may not be monolithic in matters of administration, for each national church usually has the right of self-government, but, as far as concerns dogmatic and canonical unity, the Orthodox Church IS monolithic. All the genuine Orthodox churches (that is, all the canonical Orthodox

churches) in the world constitute the One, Holy, Catholic (Universal), Apostolic Eastern Orthodox Church. They all have identical doctrine, canons, sacraments and liturgical forms.

As far as the administration is concerned, all the Orthodox churches fall into two categories: the autocephalous, that is the self-governing, and the autonomous, that is, those which have no higher hierarchy of their own, but derive it from another Orthodox Church. The autocephalous Orthodox churches are:

Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople	[Turkey]
Patriarchate of Alexandria	[Egypt]
Patriarchate of Jerusalem	[Israel]
Patriarchate of Antioch	[Syria]
Patriarchate of Moscow and all Russia	[Russia]
Patriarchate of Serbia	[Serbia, Yugoslavia]
Patriarchate of Bulgaria	[Bulgaria]
Patriarchate of Romania	[Romania]
Catholicate of Georgia	[Georgia, former USSR]
Church of Greece	[Greece]
Archdiocese of Cyprus	[Cyprus]
Orthodox Church of Albania	[Albania]
Orthodox Church of Finland	[Finland]
Orthodox Church of Poland	[Poland]
Orthodox Church of Czechoslovakia	[Czech Republic]
Archdiocese of Sinai	[Egypt]

The autonomous Orthodox churches of various jurisdictions are in China, Korea, North America, South America, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and various European countries.

There are some non-canonical religious groups which call themselves "Orthodox", but, in fact, they are heterodox, schismatic and, in some cases, even heretical. Only those Orthodox churches which have canonical unity with all canonical orthodox churches are canonical themselves. In addition to dogmatic unity, the observance of the same canonical principles by all the Orthodox churches is vitally important for the unity of the Orthodox Church. Binding for all self-governing and autonomous, that is, for all canonical Orthodox churches, are 85 Apostolic canons, 189 canons of the Seven General Councils, 327 canons of the local Synods and 254 canons of the Church Fathers - making a total of 855 canons.

The governing body of an autocephalous Orthodox Church is her Synod, of which the ruling hierarch is the president. The ruling power is shared by all the bishops. This means that no single bishop has exclusive power in ruling the Church, but all of them together represent the highest authority in the Church. It is important to emphasize that

a hierarch has power IN THE CHURCH ONLY, but not OUTSIDE and ABOVE the Church. Furthermore, the ruling hierarch in any Orthodox Church is a presiding bishop, a "first among equals", but never the absolute first. This is valid in regard to the Ecumenical Patriarch, as well, for he is also only a presiding Patriarch, but he has no special power of authority to act as spokesman for the entire Orthodox Church, except when given the consent of other patriarchs and ruling hierarchs of Orthodox Churches.

CONCLUSIONS

The Irish in America are very proud of their identity. On certain occasions, they proudly wear their national costumes, decorate their home and themselves with green, and play their national music. They faithfully observe St. Patrick's Day as their national holiday and almost all Americans join them in that celebration. Jews and other national and ethnic groups in America also proudly preserve their national identities, their cultural heritages, languages and religions. We Orthodox faithful have all the necessary reasons to preserve and cherish our Orthodox Faith UNALTERED. WE SHOULD HAVE THE COURAGE TO BE DIFFERENT KNOWING THAT

ORTHODOXY IS THE RIGHT-BELIEVING RELIGION AND THAT THE EASTERN ORTHODOX CHURCH IS THE AUTHENTIC CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

Instead of considering and/or seeking the change of our Orthodox Faith and Church, we better pay heed to Fr. Seraphim Rose's passionate plea:

Orthodox Christians! Hold fast to the grace which you have; never let it become a matter of habit; never measure it by merely human standards or expect it to be logical or comprehensible to those who understand nothing higher than what is human or who think to obtain grace of the Holy Spirit in some other way than that which the One Church of Christ has handed down to us.⁵⁴

There is no need for us Orthodox Christians to adapt ourselves to any other religions. All we have to do is what St. Gregory of Sinai requested us to do, and that is:

BECOME WHAT YOU ALREADY ARE

FIND HIM WHO IS ALREADY YOURS

*LISTEN TO HIM
WHO NEVER CEASES SPEAKING TO YOU*

OWN HIM WHO ALREADY OWNS YOU

*Fr. Mateja Matejic
Columbus, Ohio
May 9, 1994*

ENDNOTES

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- 18 "So stark var der Geist des Mammonismus in der Kurie zur Herrschaft gekommen, dass z.b. Papst Clemens VII, noch mitten in Sturm der Reformation Kardinolshute vorteilhaft za verkaufen suchte." Karl Adam, Una Sancta:17.
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